

# THE Unexplained

## MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

John Cain, healer  
Electrical connections  
Suffering of UFO victims  
Sag  e: a second look  
Secrets of the zodiac

# 108



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# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## In next week's issue

In **Fairies, demons and aliens** we investigate the nature of the strange creatures who have always been with us – in one shape or another. George V, when young, was just one of a long line of witnesses to the terrifying phantom of the **Flying Dutchman**, the tormented sailor who, it is said, sold his soul to the Devil. We look at the legend.

Who was **Robin Hood**? And why was he an outlaw? We search the records and make some fascinating discoveries. In the **Trulli of Alberobello** the symbols on the towers reveal the evidence of dark forces at work. And in **Origins of the zodiac** a wealth of little-known symbolism is discovered in the signs of Cancer, Leo and Virgo.

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# Secrets of the zodiac

The images and symbols that represent the signs of the zodiac have evolved over many centuries and draw on ancient traditions – some of them secret. FREDERICK GOODMAN examines the history of the graphic and pictorial forms of Aries, Taurus and Gemini

ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING aspects of astrology is the story of the origin and evolution of the images and symbols of the 12 zodiacal signs. The images are the pictorial forms of animals, human beings and objects, loosely related to the constellations of the zodiac, while the symbols – sometimes also called sigils – are the 'shorthand' graphic forms representing the signs.

Most of the images for the signs of the zodiac have changed little since the very beginnings of astrology in the first millennium BC. The symbols, on the other hand, have changed greatly. All these changes reflect extremely interesting alterations in the secret teachings and traditions that have been associated at various times with the zodiacal signs. Major changes took place when the zodiac was reinterpreted in the light of Christianity, and again when it was related to developments in such arcane subjects as alchemy and occultism.

We shall consider all 12 of the signs, beginning with Aries, Taurus and Gemini. Each of these three images is much as it was when the Babylonians and Egyptians first drew their versions of the zodiac. In the famous zodiac in the temple in the Egyptian city of Dandara, Aries was represented as a ram. It survived in that form in the medieval zodiac – for example, in the lovely zodiac on the north door of the west front of Chartres



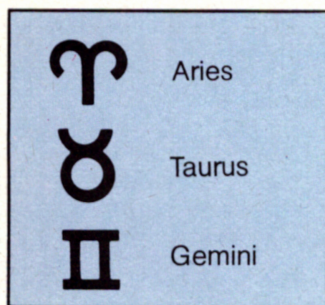
Cathedral in France. The symbol for Aries has changed a great deal, however.

Taurus was represented as a bull in the earliest of Babylonian and Egyptian zodiacs. The weight of the bull's body and its sexual power linked naturally with the qualities of this second zodiacal sign, which is traditionally the sign of the slow and ponderous but sexually active.

Gemini was originally represented by the image of two youths or men. In the Roman zodiac, which was influenced by Egyptian and Greek astrology, they were identified with the twin sons of Leda: Castor, who was mortal, and Pollux, who was immortal.

However, in the early Middle Ages the





Above: the graphic symbols representing the first three signs of the zodiac

Right: a ram has been the image for Aries since Babylonian times. This example is from the medieval zodiac at Chartres Cathedral, France

Previous page (top): in this 14th-century astrological drawing Aries (the ram) sits on the head, Taurus (the bull) on the neck and Gemini (the twins) on the upper arms. Each part of the body was traditionally associated with a sign of the zodiac

Previous page (bottom): the zodiac carved on the north door of the west front of Chartres Cathedral in France

couple were more and more frequently depicted as being of opposite sexes, as in the 13th-century zodiac in the floor of San Miniato al Monte in Florence, Italy. This change in symbolism reflected changes in the relationship between men and women, and these beginnings of the emancipation of women were expressed in the romance literature of chivalry at this time. The zodiacal images marked on the material plane these developments on the spiritual plane.



Inevitably, this male-female symbolism in the 'new' Gemini was taken to carnal extremes, so that at times during the 15th and 16th centuries Gemini is represented in the form of a pair of lovers, sometimes even engaged in sexual congress. An example may be seen in a popular woodcut illustration from a shepherd's calendar of the early 16th century, which shows a personification of Mercury, with the two zodiacal signs over which he rules – Virgo and Gemini. In marked contrast to this is the tender image of Gemini in the quatrefoil on the façade of Amiens Cathedral in France, an expression of a gentle and spiritualised love between the sexes.

Behind the outer images of the zodiacal signs there is an abundance of secret and esoteric meanings, often used by alchemists, artists, poets and builders. In the esoteric tradition Aries represents the fire of the spirit. Taurus represents earthiness and fecundity, growth and incarnation. Gemini represents communication and expression.

Without a knowledge of astrological symbolism it would be difficult to understand the meaning of many alchemical texts and pictures. An alchemical drawing from the 17th-century work *Mirror of truth* is an example. In it a man holds a flaming brand in his right hand, the flames issuing from a symbol like that used for Aries. The flames are burning a church.

To understand the picture, one needs to know that in the esoteric tradition Aries is the sign of spirit and that it has two ways of working in the world: it may be destructive or creative. The church here is a symbol for the spirit, and the flames represent the destructive aspect of Aries.

In the other hand, the man holds an image



Medieval representations of the Gemini twins varied. On the south door of the west front of Chartres Cathedral (left) they are depicted as male figures standing behind a large shield, suggesting a connection with the military order of the Knights Templar. On the façade of Amiens Cathedral (right) Gemini is represented by the figures of a man and a woman holding hands, expressive of spiritual love between the sexes, while in a 16th-century woodcut illustration of the planet Mercury (above right) the Gemini couple are shown as physical lovers







Above right: a drawing from the 17th-century work *Mirror of truth* depicts both the Aries symbol (part of the burning brand in the man's hand on the left) and the pictorial image (the ram, top right) to suggest the destructive and creative aspects of Aries



of the world, surmounted by a cross. Above, an arrow leading from a celestial ram, the image of Aries, points towards the cross, to show that the proper channel for the Aries impulse is towards a beneficial relationship with the earth below. Spirit is constantly seeking to enrich and fructify the earth.

### Symbolism of Aries

A more complex example of the use of Aries as a symbol of spirit may be seen in the epic poem *The divine comedy*, composed in the early 14th century by the Italian poet Dante. In the poem Dante imagines himself guided through hell, purgatory and heaven. Purgatory is a mountain approached through gates. On the cornice, Dante sees carved images of sinners who fell because of their pride. He associates the climb up the mountain with the steep climb up the steps to the church of San Miniato al Monte, which overlooks Florence, Dante's birthplace. At this point an angel appears and removes from his forehead the sin of pride.

The right understanding of this part of the poem requires an understanding of the nature of Aries. According to medieval astrologers, this first sign of the zodiac had rule over the city of Florence and also over the human head. Thus the very mention of Florence and of the forehead evokes Aries. More importantly, the sin characteristic of fiery Aries is that of pride.

Aries rules the beginnings of things, including entry into the spiritual realms. It is therefore an excellent association for the beginning of the long climb up Mount Purgatory, where the souls of the dead are spiritualised by the purging of their darker elements.

Dante's allusion to San Miniato was more than a chance reference: this was his favourite church, and he must have been aware of much of the significance of the zodiac inlaid in the floor of the nave.

Aries is a fire sign, charged with exuberant spiritual energy. Taurus is the heavy earth sign, concerned with making a fecund place where growth may take place. Aries and Taurus work together, for the fire sign sends down sparks of energy that vitalise the sluggish earth element. But they cannot complete each other: from the meeting of the light of Aries with the darkness of Taurus a third element is born, which is Gemini. Gemini is the first of the 'human' signs in the zodiac. It is also the first sign that belongs fully to the Earth – there is something unearthly about Aries and Taurus. This idea is expressed in one of the most splendid zodiacs in the West, on one of the portals of the abbey church at Vézelay, France. The two images of Aries and Taurus have been given a very special treatment here: there is a complete break with tradition, for each is represented as part animal, part fish. They are reminiscent of the image of Capricorn that was already standard in the Middle Ages. This curious deviation from the medieval norm may be intended to indicate that both of these signs are not deeply related to the tangible world, but are archetypes, or Platonic forms: they are linked to the world of ideas, spiritual forces that are seeking to find a material expression, yet cannot touch the material world. It is significant that, by contrast, the pair of Gemini figures at Vézelay are embracing, standing on the Earth against a background of stars.

A fine example of the symbolism associated with Taurus has been revealed in







the small village of Gropina, near Arezzo in north-eastern Italy. A pulpit in the church there bears some extraordinary symbols. On the lectern three figures are engraved: an eagle is above a human being, who in turn is above a lion. These symbolise three of the four Evangelists: the eagle symbolises St John; the human figure, carrying a book, is St Matthew; the lion is St Mark.

The symbol of the fourth Evangelist, St Luke, is a bull. If we seek to find the reason for its absence from the Gropina lectern, we must grasp something of the esoteric teaching concerned with the Christian view of zodiacal lore.

Taurus is associated with the throat and especially with the larynx and speech. Indeed it is still maintained in astrological circles that a person in whom Taurus is well-emphasised will have a beautiful voice. Because of this ancient association the early Christian symbolism adopted Taurus as one of the symbols for Christ, the Word or Logos. The association was twofold: the Logos was linked with speech, ruled over by Taurus; while the sacrifice of the crucifixion was linked with the idea of the sacrificial bull – one of the commonest sacrificial offerings in Greek and Roman times.

Applying this to the lectern at Gropina, we see that the fourth symbol appears when the priest mounts the pulpit, speaking the words of God and symbolising Christ.

A detail of the carving of the pulpit expresses most carefully the fact that this zodiacal symbolism is quite intentional. On the capital of the central support is a narrow frieze of triangular shapes, which perhaps are a reference to the Trinity. One of the 10 triangles differs from the rest – it is an image of a bull's head. This is a sure indication that the bull 'missing' from the sequence above it is actually a reference to a secret tradition, linking Christ with the bull.

The 'secret' associations of Taurus extend beyond the realm of religious art. The modern symbol for Taurus was not used in medieval times; it appears to have been taken from an almost lost Greek tradition of astrology and was probably brought back into use in the West by the thinkers of Chartres, who in the 13th and 14th centuries spread many secret ideas in Europe. When the 16th-century German occultist Agrippa gave an account of this symbol he had no hesitation in insisting that it was based on a drawing of a bull's head. But he may have been hiding a much deeper level of symbolism. The drawing might with equal reason be seen as a representation of the Earth with a receptive crescent above. This crescent cradles the spiritual forces that flow into the Earth as a result of the sacrifice made by the Logos, Christ.

By such reasoning, the relatively modern symbol for Aries makes good sense when placed over the symbol for Taurus, for it

Left: the bull (the image of both St Luke and Taurus) at first seems to be conspicuous by its absence on this pulpit in the church in Gropina in Italy, where the figures of an eagle, a human being and a lion represent three of the four Evangelists. But the bull's role as a symbol of the Word of God is fulfilled by the priest whenever he enters the pulpit to preach

Below and bottom: in the zodiac on the abbey church at Vézelay in France, Aries and Taurus are shown as part animal, part fish, symbolising their spiritual aspects



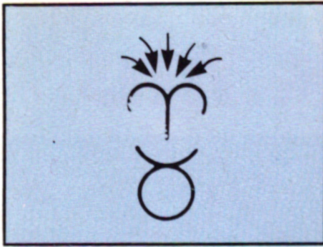
represents the idea of spiritual forces being funnelled into the crescent-shaped receptacle of Taurus. Each time we speak we gather ideas from our spiritual understanding and pour them into the larynx, where words are born. This association of Aries and Taurus denotes the descent of the spirit (Aries) into the womb of the Earth (Taurus).

The hidden meaning of the symbol for Gemini can consequently be seen as a completion of the process.

Once the spirit has found words then communication is possible. What has been formulated in Aries and Taurus is communicated in Gemini, which rules the realm of communication. The symbol for Gemini, though reintroduced into Europe relatively recently, appears to derive from the ancient Greeks. The symbol consists of two vertical lines standing on a horizontal line, and







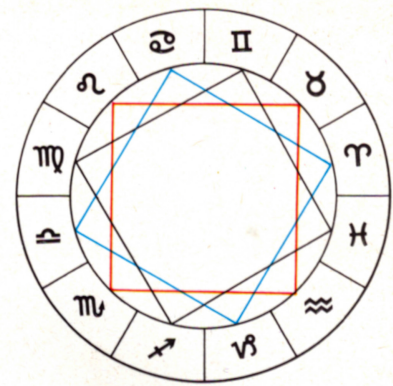
Top: the modern symbol for Aries placed above that of Taurus can be interpreted as expressing the channelling of spiritual forces into the earth

Above: the male Gemini figures on the walls of the baptistry at Parma in Italy are touching each other's head, while at the same time grasping the branch of a tree. This is thought to symbolise Gemini's ability to express what has been formulated by Aries and Taurus



— air — fire  
— water — earth

Aries  
Taurus  
Gemini  
Cancer  
Leo  
Virgo  
Libra  
Scorpio  
Sagittarius  
Capricorn  
Aquarius  
Pisces



— cardinal  
— fixed  
— mutable

## All human life is there

One important way of dividing the zodiacal signs is to group them into 'triplcities' (above left). Each consists of three signs, linked with one of the four traditional 'elements' – air, fire, earth or water. The 'airy' signs represent the intellectual qualities of reason, communication and refinement. They also represent humane feeling. The fire signs rule over headstrong natures and noble aims, energy, enthusiasm, ambition and emotion. When things go wrong such natures can, like fire, be dangerously destructive.

The watery signs rule natures that are emotional, sensitive, and easily impressed. They are artistic, sociable, and often psychically gifted. Those people

ruled by the earth signs are practical, stolid, shrewd and diplomatic and inclined to be cautious and sceptical of the ideas of others.

The signs can also be classified into three groups of four, called 'quadruplicities' (above right). According to some modern astrologers, the four cardinal signs rule the conscious mind and have a dynamic influence, though somewhat lacking in direction. People governed by the fixed signs tend to have strong desires and are stubborn, though dependable. Their subconscious minds are strongly influenced by these signs. The mutable signs are involved with the 'superconscious' – the spiritual and psychic qualities of Man's higher nature.

surmounted by a second horizontal line. This could represent two people standing in close proximity; one grasps an idea from the spiritual realm and expresses it in such a way as to communicate a truth to the other – symbolised by the upper horizontal line.

Look once more at the image of a man and a woman in the carving of Gemini at Amiens. They are not merely holding hands: they are communicating, perhaps even conversing.

The image of Gemini high in the walls of the baptistry of the cathedral at Parma in northern Italy comprises two men, in the ancient tradition. Each touches the head of the other and at the same time grasps the branch of a tree. This is certainly an attempt to symbolise the bringing down of that which belongs to the head (the thought represented by Aries) to the Earth (the rooted trees).

The zodiacal image for Gemini at Chartres Cathedral is swathed in mystery. The zodiacal imagery around the north door of the west front is not complete. There are only 10 signs on this arch: Gemini and Pisces are missing. They were placed on the south door of the west front. Historians have given

several explanations for this curious transposition of images. The symbolism of the Gemini figures may enable us to pierce through some of the mystery.

These two figures are both male, in the classic tradition. But in this image they are both standing behind a huge shield. Each has one arm across the chest, in a fashion reminiscent of the arms folded in the form of a cross in the effigies on the tombs of knights. This posture is probably intended to link the cathedral to the order of the Knights Templar. There could otherwise be little reason for using the military symbol of the shield in this way, and for setting apart the figure that incorporated it as something especially important. One or two historians have indeed suggested that the vast amounts of money required for the design and construction of this cathedral were made available from the resources of the Knights Templar, and that much of its secret symbolism is linked to this strange and powerful order.

*The symbolism of the crab, the lion and the virgin are discussed on page 2174*





# Anguish of the UFO victims

In one of a flurry of UFO sightings at the end of 1980, three people in Texas received injuries that resembled severe radiation poisoning. JOHN SCHUESSLER continues his report on the gruesome events at Huffman



A CLOSE ENCOUNTER with an unidentified object can be a dangerous rather than an exciting experience, as three people discovered on a lonely road in Texas, USA, on 29 December 1980. On that evening when Betty Cash, Vickie Landrum and young Colby Landrum met up with a large diamond-shaped UFO on their way home, they had no idea that the event would change their lives. All three were injured by the encounter, and since that evening their health has continued to deteriorate.

When they stopped the car and got out to look at the UFO, the object was less than 55 yards (50 metres) away. It gave out so much heat that they were bathed in perspiration and their skin burned. The light that came from it was so bright that it hurt their eyes, and they were alarmed by its shrill beeping and by the bursts of flame it emitted. And this was only the beginning . . .

When the UFO departed, Betty drove Vickie and Colby to their home in Dayton. As she got out of the car Vickie said, 'My head hurts and I'm sick.' By midnight she felt worse. By that time both she and Colby had developed a condition similar to severe sunburn; they felt feverish and started to vomit. Later diarrhoea started and was uncontrollable for many days. They also experienced severe headaches.

Vickie attempted to treat their burns with





baby oil, but it took several days, and several bottles of oil, to bring the pain under control. She and Colby also consumed several bottles of commercial medicine intended to prevent diarrhoea, but without success. The headaches also refused to respond to any treatment. After three weeks the severity of their illness subsided, but the symptoms continued to recur over the following year.

Since their encounter with the UFO Vickie and Colby have been plagued by periodic outbreaks of skin troubles, as if they were more susceptible to infection than before. But the most far-reaching injury has been the damage to their eyes. Their eyelids became infected very rapidly, and have never fully recovered. Since the incident Vickie has had to have three new pairs of spectacles with successively stronger prescriptions to match the deterioration in her eyesight. Her eyesight is continuing to deteriorate and she still suffers from periodic eye infections; she fears she may eventually go blind. Colby too has experienced similar problems with his eyes, although he has needed only one new pair of spectacles since the incident.

Within a few weeks of the encounter Vickie had lost about 30 per cent of her hair, and had large bald patches on her head.

When her hair grew again it was of a different texture. 'It is frizzy,' she says, 'but more manageable.' Colby lost only a small patch of hair on the crown of his head; this, too, grew again in time.

Betty's injuries seemed even more severe than those of Vickie and Colby. 'The blinding headache that developed within an hour or so made me feel like I was going to die,' she said. She experienced a severe sunburn-like condition, and developed large water blisters, some as large as golf balls, over her face, head and neck. One of these covered her right eyelid and extended across her right temple. She also developed a long-term aversion to warm water, sunshine or other heat source.

Betty had been an energetic woman. She ran a restaurant and a grocery store, and she had been planning to open a larger restaurant. Two years later she was still physically drained. In the year following the encounter she spent five periods in hospital, two of them in intensive care. Within four weeks of the encounter she had lost over half the hair on her head. Although it grew again slowly the texture of the new hair was not the same as that of the original hair. Betty has also been plagued with skin eruptions; many

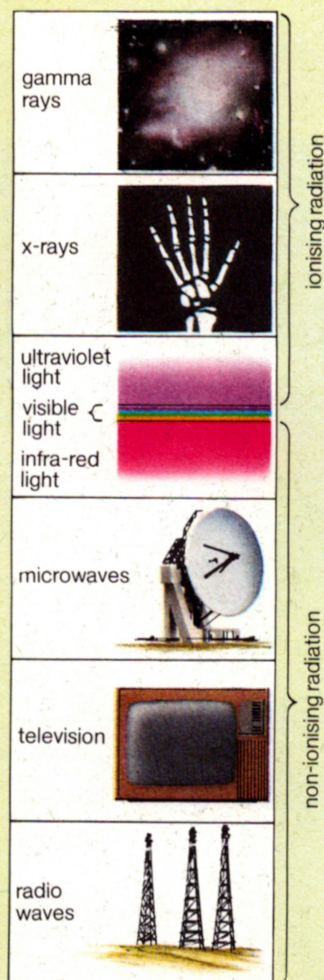
Two months after her encounter with the UFO Betty Cash (left) had lost much of her hair. She was also suffering from skin blisters, nausea and severe headaches. A year and a half after the event Vickie Landrum (far left) still exhibited signs of facial burns and (below left) skin sores

## Sickening waves

Electromagnetic radiation consists of waves of energy of varying lengths and frequencies spanning a spectrum from radio waves to gamma rays (right). Moving up the spectrum the wavelength decreases and the frequency increases. The spectrum also divides into ionising radiation (gamma rays, x-rays and ultraviolet) and non-ionising (infrared, microwaves, television and radio waves). It is ionising radiation that is potentially most damaging to living tissue. Exposure to ionising radiation can cause skin burns, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of hair, lowered resistance to infection, headaches, fatigue, and other problems.

The sunburn-type injuries inflicted in the Huffman incident could be described as typical of exposure to ultraviolet radiation. They could also have been caused by x-rays or microwaves. The eye injuries could have been caused by any type of radiation, but they are most commonly seen in cases of ultraviolet exposure. Workers exposed to microwaves have also suffered damage to the tissues of the eye.

Microwave exposure produces symptoms similar to those of ionising radiation; it often produces an easily irritated skin such as Betty, Vickie and Colby experienced. If the microwave is pulsed,



its effects are more harmful. Some devices that pulse microwaves also produce x-rays, and this combination could account for most of the injuries seen in the Huffman case.

Radiation damage is difficult to diagnose. Radiation burns (above) can be mistaken for more commonplace injuries such as sunburn. Even more difficult to predict are the long-term effects. Once exposed, an individual may develop diseases such as leukaemia up to 20 years later. Colby's grandmother Vickie is deeply worried about these potential future problems, and doctors can give her little reassurance.



## Cash-Landrum case

of these are as big as a large coin and leave the skin permanently scarred.

Doctors are baffled by Betty's symptoms, and are convinced they are not connected with her earlier heart surgery. They have speculated that the symptoms exhibited by all three victims could have been caused by exposure to some type of electromagnetic radiation (see box).

Betty, Vickie and Colby not only suffered physical injuries from their encounter with the UFO; they also exhibit strong emotional disturbances as a result of their experience. Whenever they recount the events of that evening, or return to the place where they saw the object, they become very upset. Colby had terrifying nightmares for several weeks after the encounter, and during a re-enactment of the event set up by investigators he developed a high temperature and fever. 'He was so terrified,' said Vickie, 'I thought he would die of fright.'

Neither woman has fully recovered from the experience, nor been able to return to work. The consequent loss of income has been devastating for them. Even if they were not prevented from working by their poor eyesight and general debilitation, it would be impossible for them to work in the food service industry because of their continuing skin eruptions. Doctors are unable to predict when their condition will improve.

Betty, Vickie and Colby were not the only people to report seeing a UFO in the Huffman area on the evening of 29 December 1980.

Betty Cash, Vickie Landrum and her young grandson Colby Landrum a year and a half after they saw the UFO that changed their lives



Several residents of the small east Texas towns of Eastgate, Dayton and Liberty (all lying on an east-west line running from Humble, Texas, to the Louisiana border) reported seeing UFOs within two hours of the Huffman incident (see page 2121). The countryside in this part of Texas is sparsely

Early one morning in December 1967, Maryellen Kelley was outside her home in Mohomet, Illinois, USA, when she saw a large orange UFO. The object was about 40 yards (36 metres) away and flying about 50 to 65 feet (15 to 20 metres) above the ground. As soon as she saw the object, Mrs Kelley felt an electric shock go through her body. She developed a severe headache (which refused to respond to treatment), her face reddened, her hands and legs were burned, her eyes became bloodshot and her vision was affected. She also developed earache in her left ear, nosebleeds, pains in the chest and excessive thirst. Although her exposure was of short duration, her injuries endured for a long time. The incident was described in *Fate* magazine in May 1969.

In Finland in November 1976, 19-year-old Eero Lammi was knocked to the ground by a luminous ray from a UFO and suffered burns to the chest. His injuries were similar to those of a 20-year-old man from Tyler, Texas, who was hit in the chest by a luminous ray from a UFO in January 1979. His chest was marked by a large diamond-shaped burn for many months (right).

## Burnt and bewildered

In August 1972, *Data Net Report* described how Osvaldo d'Annunzio (19 years old) was paralysed by a low-flying UFO, so that he was unable to run away. His face was severely burned, and he suffered afterwards from violent headaches. He commented: 'The cows in the surrounding meadows changed colour and did not resume their true colour until after the UFO's departure.'





populated and dotted with forest and marshlands.

On the day before the Huffman event a number of residents of Ohio county, Kentucky, reported seeing strange objects in the sky. Two young observers were six-year-old twins Jason and Jesse Williams, who said they saw four silver 'triangle things' flying at low altitude; two of the things flew on together, while the other two flew off in different directions.

Also on 28 December 1980 deputy sheriff Frank Chinn of Echols, Kentucky, told a local newspaper he saw 'an upside-down diamond' with flashing lights around the middle. His description of its shape, brightness and low speed corresponded with the description of the object seen at the Huffman incident. This was one of six UFOs sighted at about 5.30 p.m. that day.

A young Houstonian, Jan Moffett, believed she saw the same object seen by Betty and the others near Huffman. She was en route to North Dakota when she saw a big bright light coming down from the sky north of Houston. Unfortunately she lost sight of the object when it neared the ground, because it was obscured by the trees covering the area. Others also saw the bright light. A man and his 12-year-old son, who were travelling eastwards in the vicinity of New Caney, Texas, said they saw the object only a short distance away, flying about 150 feet (45 metres) above the road. When they accelerated to get closer to it, the object turned

away from the road and headed north. According to these two observers, the UFO was bright, rectangular and flew slowly. It was larger than an aeroplane.

Betty, Vickie and Colby originally agreed not to tell other people about what they had seen, for fear they would be thought crazy. 'It was just too weird to mention,' said Vickie, 'but we didn't know then we had been hurt.' They eventually broke their pact of secrecy to tell the doctors who were treating them what had caused their injuries.

Vickie has been concerned to establish what really happened that fateful evening, primarily to ensure that Colby will receive the correct treatment and be able to grow up healthy. She is not concerned about, or interested in, other UFO sightings at the time. Betty shows rather more interest in the other sightings, but her continuing illness prevents her grasping the full significance of these events.

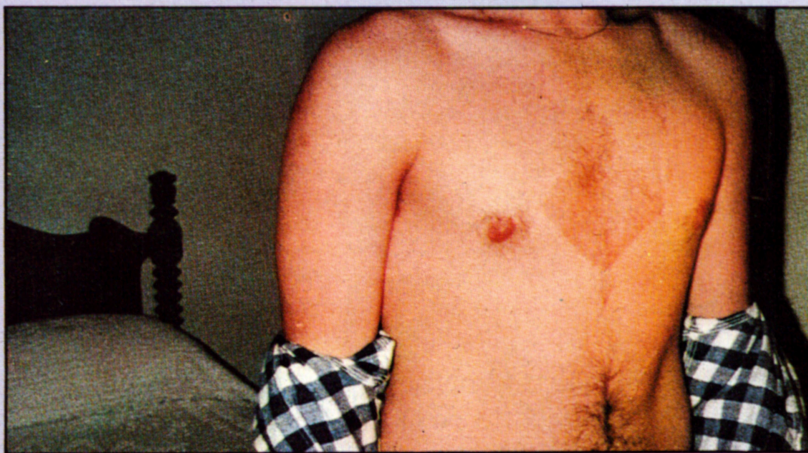
There seems to be no doubt that on the evening of 29 December 1980 the three of them encountered a brightly lit flying object and a large number of helicopters, and that as a result of this encounter all three have sustained lasting physical and emotional damage. In the past they used to make fun of people who claimed to have seen UFOs. They are still sceptical, but they no longer find it a joking matter.

*UFO or US secret weapon? Which was it the victims saw? See page 2198*



Left: in England a Plymouth girl was burned on the hand by the light from a UFO on 10 September 1981. This picture was taken two days later

In Canada, Steve Michalak was out in the countryside one weekend in May 1967 when he encountered a cigar-shaped object emitting a brilliant, purple light, near Falcon Lake about 75 miles (120 kilometres) east of Winnipeg. He received burns on his face and chest (below) and subsequently experienced nausea, vomiting, weight loss, weakness, diarrhoea, dizziness and blackouts. Mr Michalak eventually made a full recovery from the effects of the encounter, as did most of the other victims.





**Emilie Sagée was not the only 19th-century girl to have a well-witnessed double, as the archives of psychical research show. But, ask COLIN GODMAN and LINDSAY ST CLAIRE, was the evidence for these bizarre events just too good to be true? What really happened?**

EIGHTEEN MONTHS after the young French teacher Emilie Sagée came to the Pensionat at Neuwelcke, in Livonia (now in the USSR), the number of pupils had dwindled from 42 in 1845 to a mere dozen. Emilie's doppelgänger, or double, was blamed for this change in fortune, and at the risk of scandal the school's directors had no choice but to dismiss Mlle Sagée.

Although her professional qualifications and conduct were beyond reproach, Emilie had to leave. As long as she remained at Neuwelcke, she was told, the school's future was at risk. Emilie's dismay is easy to imagine, and Julie von Güldenstübbe – whose



## Seeing double

account forms the basis of this story – recalled Emilie exclaiming, 'Alas, this is the nineteenth time: What am I to do?'

To have been dismissed from 19 teaching posts in such a short career may seem rather improbable, but Emilie explained to her young friends that she had begun teaching in 1829, when she was barely 16. She had been dismissed each time for more or less the same reason: two 'Emilie Sagées' were one too many for every school. It would have come as little comfort to Emilie to note that things improved at Neuwelcke after she left. And within a term or two the nobility resumed sending their daughters to the Pensionat. Peace had returned to the school.

Julie did not immediately lose contact with Mlle Sagée. Although she did not see her for a while after the dismissal, she learned

Top: two of the schoolgirls at the Pensionat von Neuwelcke who were witnesses to Emilie Sagée's 'fetch', from the dramatised story made by the BBC in the 1970s for their *Leap in the dark* television series. Introduced by Colin Wilson (above), the series was well-researched – although hard facts about the Sagée case proved difficult to come by

that Emilie had gone to live with a sister-in-law who had several young children. The young Baroness went to visit her and found that the toddlers knew all about the French woman. They said they had two 'Aunt Emilies'.

Unfortunately, Emilie Sagée's recorded story ends there. Julie lost contact with her completely when her former teacher disappeared into the heartland of Russia some time in the 1850s.

What do we really know about Emilie Sagée? Apart from her unfortunate teaching record we know she claimed to be 32 years old when she arrived in Neuwelcke in 1845 and that she gave her place of birth as Dijon, France.

When the authors began researching this case in 1976 they hoped to find at least some record of an Emilie Sagée's birth in Dijon in 1813. Every available source in the town was searched, to no avail. The writer Camille Flammarion, however, had been more fortunate. In his book *Death and its mystery* (1922) he writes about Mlle Sagée and records his own search for her origins during 1895. He describes a fruitless hunt for civic records of a family named Sagée – but he did find a note of the birth of a child named 'Octavie Saget'; a 'natural' (illegitimate) child born on 3 January 1813.

Like Mlle Sagée, Octavie would, therefore, have been 32 in 1845. Flammarion ventured to suggest that Octavie and Emilie were one and the same; the change in name occasioned, perhaps, by the young teacher's



shame about her illegitimacy.

Emilie's pupil, Julie von Güldenstübbe, was at Neuwelcke throughout Mlle Sagée's short stay, but she was only 13 and may well have misremembered the spelling of her teacher's name. Flammarion knew Julie and her brother, the Baron Güldenstübbe, in the 1860s. They were much the same age and he described them as totally sincere, a little mystical in inclination, but of the utmost integrity. Julie's brother had published a book in Paris in 1857 entitled *La réalité des esprits et le phénomène de leur écriture directe* ('The reality of spirits and the phenomenon of their direct writing').

Camille Flammarion was born in 1842 and was a distinguished astronomer at the

shared her interest in Spiritualism. He was to become the most important Russian parapsychologist of the last century and his book *Animismus und spiritismus*, published in Leipzig in 1890, contains the Emilie Sagée story.

As before, Julie von Güldenstübbe was credited as the source of the information, but Aksakov added a few insights of his own concerning Emilie's personality. He points out that although Emilie enjoyed good physical health, she had a nervous, excitable disposition. In itself this is not inconsistent with the schoolgirls' description of her as 'quiet and friendly', but it does suggest that she may have been under more strain than Julie and the other girls realised.

### An elusive place

The school at Neuwelcke proves harder to track down than Emilie herself. All the accounts locate Neuwelcke 36 miles (58 kilometres) from Riga and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles (6 kilometres) from Wolmar – but Wolmar, or Valmiera as it has been renamed, lies 75 miles (120 kilometres) from Riga. In itself the error may not be significant, but it does raise the question: did Neuwelcke ever exist? Unfortunately, the Latvian Legation have been unable to identify such a place. There is a farm (which has never been a school) near Valmiera called 'Jaunvelki' but that is the nearest that the Latvians can find to 'Neuwelcke' – not a very convincing link.

However, the loss of the Neuwelcke connection need not be too discouraging. Livonia itself has experienced many changes of identity over the years. The small country had long been hotly disputed by Poland, Sweden and Russia. In the 1800s Russia



Paris Observatory when he met Julie. Although a scientist, he was intrigued by the paranormal and by Julie's story.

The first account of the case was written by Robert Dale Owen. His background was very different from Flammarion's. Dale Owen was born in 1801 in Glasgow, the son of the famous social reformer, Robert Owen, who created experimental communities on both sides of the Atlantic. In old age Robert Owen's socialism gave way to Spiritualism and this had influenced Dale. After joining his father in Indiana, in the USA, Robert Dale Owen went into politics, entered Congress, supported Emancipation and became one of the chief advocates of Spiritualism in America. In 1859 he completed his book *Footfalls on the boundary of another world*; in it he included an account of his meeting with Julie, giving her version of the events surrounding Emilie Sagée.

The third source of material about Emilie Sagée is the Russian writer Alexander Aksakov. He came from an important literary family and became a distinguished physiologist at St Petersburg (now Leningrad) University. He was the same age as Julie and

Above: Dijon, France, where Mlle Sagée claimed to have been born in 1813. Yet research failed to reveal any record of her birth, although an 'Octavie Saget' – an illegitimate child – is noted in the register of births at about the right date. Could Octavie and Emilie have been one and the same?

Right: Riga, now part of Latvia. The Sagée story places the school 36 miles (58 kilometres) from here – but no 'Neuwelcke' could be found by the BBC research team





ruled Livonia, but the country was still controlled by the rich German families who owned large estates there. The whole expanse of flat peatbogs, lakes and forests became the Republic of Latvia in 1918, bounded by Estonia, Lithuania, Russia and the Baltic Sea. Since 1940 Latvia has been part of the USSR.

How does the Emilie Sagée case fit into contemporary knowledge? It is possible to discount the traditional anecdotes of astral projection or out-of-the-body experiences. All such cases imply an effort of will to 'project' the subject or some sort of perception while 'out of the body'. In Emilie's case there is no evidence that she ever projected her 'fetch' of her own volition or that she recorded any sensations while 'in' her double.

For 100 years the Emilie Sagée case has attracted such labels as illusion, hallucination, mass hysteria and the like. But there is no evidence that the schoolgirls all suffered from any marked nervous disorder that may have encouraged them to hallucinate. 'Hallucinations' and 'illusions' are commonly understood to be the result of the brain misinterpreting unusual data fed into it by our senses. In other words what we see is merely a subjective interpretation of the information sent to our brain from our eyes, based largely on our personal experience – and expectation.

Optical illusions are often the result of trying to make sense of incomplete data; in fact, often a small sensory input is turned, by our ever-rational brains, into something different; it can become almost anything

## Two by two

In the book *Phantasms of the living* (1886) by SPR founders Gurney, Myers and Podmore, there appear stories of other 'Emilies'.

Like Mlle Sagée, Lucy Eden could be in two places at once. In the autumn of 1845 a party of young people were staying at Cherington, a house near Shipston-on-Stour in Warwickshire, England (below). Although Lucy was 17 and her cousins much the same age, they were playing hide-and-seek. Lucy was clearly seen wearing a brown and white dress, standing under a tree in the orchard. Her cousins gave chase, and Lucy ran out into the cowyard, where, to the amazement of the others, she disappeared. But Lucy protested that she had been hiding in the wash-house with another cousin – who verified her story.

Lucy's 'fetch' appeared again in the spring of 1847 at her father's rectory at Leigh in Essex. Lucy had mumps, but she was up and about, although her face was bandaged. One morning the nursery

maid, Caroline, passed Lucy walking from the drawing room to the library. Soon after, the Edens' maid asked Caroline where Lucy was. But the library was empty. Lucy was found in her bedroom where she had been, she claimed, all morning. Caroline refused to admit she had been mistaken, having particularly noted the bandages on Lucy's face.

Lucy, like Emilie Sagée, never saw her own fetch. But Sarah Jane Hall saw *her* double in 1863 in her home, Sibberton, near Wansford (now in Cambridgeshire). One night at supper Sarah's fetch was seen standing by the sideboard. Four people saw the figure: Sarah, her husband, and a cousin and her husband. They all saw Sarah's double distinctly, and her husband said: 'It is Sarah.' But the apparition, which had looked quite real, vanished. Had Mr Hall 'suggested' the identity of the apparition to the others? If not, what had they all seen?





– as long as it fits the pattern that suits our subconscious minds (a fact exploited by stage illusionists and the theatre in general). One can imagine an old house, ill-lit with flickering candles, where shadows and reflections create convincing illusions of sinister figures; a spurious reality created from insufficient information.

### Before your very eyes

The brain demands logic; it needs to 'rationalise' the data with which it is presented. This appears to be an intelligent response to confusing sights – perhaps the only way of keeping sane in many circumstances. Optical illusions such as those produced by candlelight, sunshine streaming through trees in an orchard, or a flash of white that perhaps suggested a fetch's handkerchief, go some way towards explaining illusory fetches. But neither optical illusions nor mental rationalisations explain why 42 schoolgirls at Neuwelcke consistently agreed that there were two Mlle Sagées.

However, the 'risky shift' effect noted by modern psychologists may throw some light on the Sagée case. This is based on the observation that when individuals bring their beliefs to a group discussion they often leave with much more extreme attitudes than they started with. Psychologists maintain that this is an unconscious result of the group discussion or argument, and that these polarised opinions tend to be lasting. These 'risky shifts' can occur in any group; we can speculate that the school at Neuwelcke – isolated, enclosed and something of an aristocratic hothouse – would provide an ideal propagating medium for the phenomenon.

But does this theory throw any light on the Emilie Sagée story? The evidence in its



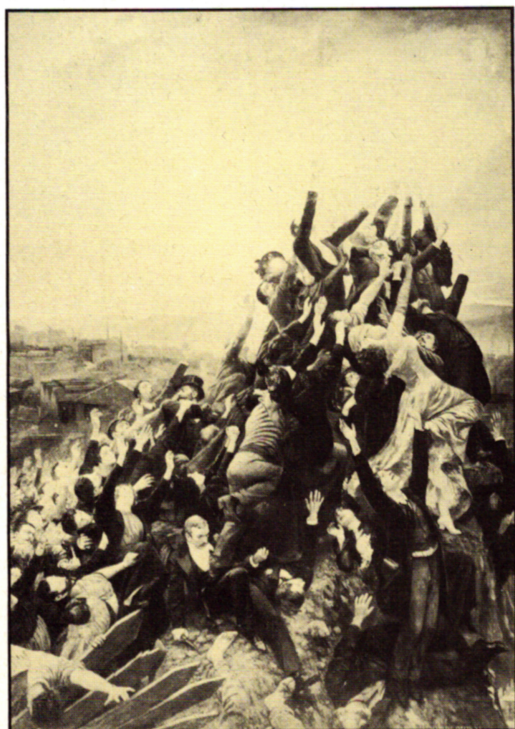
Is seeing believing? During a severe drought a mirage of water appears behind Thomson's gazelles on the parched Sambura plains of Kenya

favour is tempting: we discover that events began quietly, as single rumours that circulated swiftly, building into 'a ceaseless discussion', a kind of schoolgirl craze. After a time the events began to be viewed as something genuine – and very strange. And when the events grew even more bizarre, the number of convinced witnesses in the school also grew.

This is precisely what would be expected when a 'risky shift' occurs; there was no single, striking initial event, just the slow accumulation of gossip. But group discussions seemed, true to the 'risky shift' effect, to have dramatically reinforced their belief in Emilie's doppelgänger. That is why, ironically, the schoolgirls' 'perfect agreement' about what they witnessed is less convincing than if they had disagreed, even in trivial ways, about what they saw. Perfect unanimity among witnesses is virtually unknown. Even striking incidents produce widely varying descriptions – as any police force will testify. Total unanimity is the result of either pre-arranged agreement – a hoax or deliberate perjury – or more innocent, but intense, discussion and rationalisation.

That, then, is the psychologist's view of the little evidence we possess. The truth of what happened in Livonia in 1845 will never be known. Was Emilie Sagée's doppelgänger simply the product of gossip, reinforced by hysterical group discussion, and later recorded as fact by the mystically inclined Julie von Güldenstubbé?

There seems no doubt that the girls genuinely believed that Mlle Sagée was haunted by her fetch. At the Pensionat von Neuwelcke it seems that the old adage 'seeing is believing' was turned on its head: for a few bizarre months between 1845 and 1846 'believing', for 42 young girls, became even better than 'seeing'.



A 19th-century allegorical painting by G.A. Rochegrosse, illustrating the effects of human credulity. A single rumour of a paranormal being seen in the sky ends in this tangled mass of hysterical humanity

#### Further reading

Camille Flammarion, *Death and its mystery*, Fisher Unwin 1922

Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the living*, Trubner 1886

Robert Dale Owen, *Footfalls on the boundary of another world*, Trubner 1860

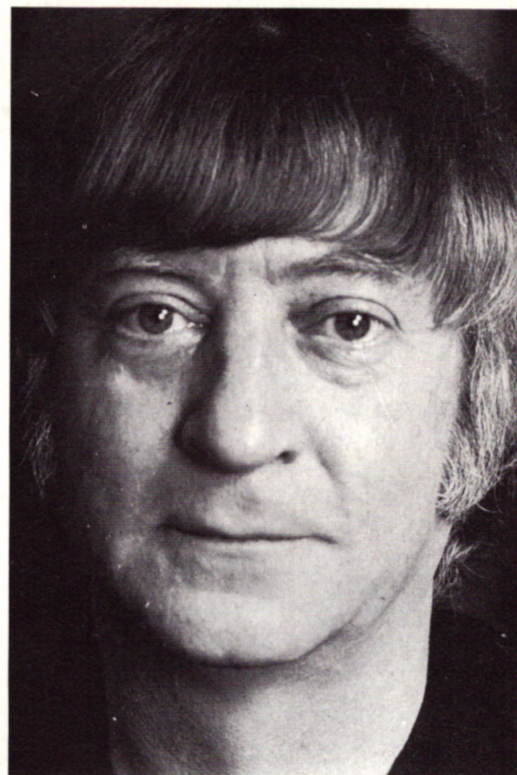


**John Cain's fame as a healer has spread far and wide. And yet he does not promise cures; he merely points out that nine out of ten people who visit him benefit in some way. DAVID HARVEY examines Cain's extraordinary gifts**

JOHN CAIN, as one of his helpers describes him, is a man of action, not of words. It is because of what he does that hundreds of people continue to come every week to his house and to the sessions that he runs in towns around his native Merseyside, north-west England. They do the talking for him, telling relatives and neighbours of the benefits they have experienced.

John Cain is a healer who has established a solid reputation that has rippled out from his home town of Liverpool to other corners of the country and beyond, as far as Japan, where he has conducted a healing tour, and Canada. Sometimes the results are spectacular, and his achievements have been sufficient to arouse the curiosity of doctors and scientists who have come along to see what happens at first hand. A few have gone on record to vouch for the effectiveness of his work. But what matters to those who continue to flock to him for help is that they

Right: John Cain, whose healing powers have gained him a worldwide reputation. He is able to help people suffering from illnesses as serious as multiple sclerosis, diabetes, arthritis and malignant tumours. During the healing process (below: Cain heals a child), Cain induces in his patients an altered state of consciousness – and he has found that the same state can be induced by his photograph alone



## Taking the Cain cure



arrive in pain and, most of them, leave feeling better. Cain does not promise cures, but reckons that over 90 per cent of those who come benefit to some degree. Some recover completely. Others experience improvement or an increased ability to cope with their illness. When it is remembered that most resort to this form of treatment only when all else has failed, the full significance of the results becomes apparent.

Valerie Wooding suffers from multiple sclerosis, an incurable and degenerative disease. There is very little that conventional medicine can do for victims of multiple sclerosis, and they have to cope with the debilitating effects of their condition as best they can. 'There were many muscles I was incapable of exercising, due to the weakness and paralysis resulting from my condition. I could not stand up straight, bend my spine, or sit up from a prone position,' Valerie Wooding says in recounting her own story in her book *John Cain – healing guide*. But she was to discover, like so many others, that this was not the end of the line, and that, with John Cain's help, she could fight back.

In common with most people on the brink of a new experience, she remembers that she 'felt nervous before my first healing'. One feature of Cain's treatment is that during it his patients go into an altered state of consciousness. In very few cases, however, is there a complete blackout; people generally experience instead a deep relaxation and



other sensations such as floating or a dream-like detachment, remaining aware of what is happening to them throughout. Depending on the nature of their problem, they may find themselves moving their limbs in ways they cannot control or simply enjoying a profound sense of peace that they have never felt before.

Those who move while in the altered state of consciousness have found themselves doing things that are impossible for them during full consciousness. Valerie Wooding says she has 'frequently exercised in ways which I never considered within my capabilities – yoga, ballet, judo, even head stands . . . I am fully conscious of what my body is doing – almost as if I am observing it – but I am also aware of the reasons for it.'

Up to 50 people undergoing such treatment in the centre of the hall in Southport, Merseyside, at any one time would seem like a recipe for disaster. People perform shoulder stands and other yoga positions without any apparent strain. Others stretch and flex their bodies energetically as if in the hands of some experienced physiotherapist. But no one crashes into anyone else or sustains any injury. Valerie Wooding regularly attends

Right: Valerie Wooding, a sufferer from multiple sclerosis, who believes that, with John Cain's help, she can fight her illness. She says that during healing sessions she can often perform movements that would ordinarily be impossible for her – including yoga, ballet, judo and even head stands. Thus muscles that would otherwise waste away can regain their strength

Below: a public healing session in progress. To cope with the large numbers of patients, Cain uses a team of helpers – many of whom he has healed – to whom he finds he can transfer his abilities at will: 'All I need to do is give my consent for healing to work through others and it will happen,' he says



the public sessions, and she is often asked by newcomers if what she does hurts. 'When I cannonball [backward and forward rolls at great speed] across the hall . . . my head can be heard cracking loudly against the parquet floor. I am aware of this. I, too, can hear it – and feel the contact. But it *does not hurt*, nor have I ever pulled a muscle or received a bruise.'

She is convinced that these exercises have a beneficial effect and are a vital part of the healing she is receiving through Cain. They ensure that muscles that would otherwise atrophy receive exercise and so regain their strength. There are non-physical benefits, too. Valerie Wooding says, 'it also increases my optimism, giving me confidence in my own physical ability, knowing that my body can allow, and survive, such apparently extreme exertion.'

It was the benefit she received from John

A letter from a reader, a Mr D. Speirs of Liverpool, tells the extraordinary story of how John Cain healed his wife. Mrs Speirs had, for the 25 years since the birth of their second child, been chronically ill with an unidentified spinal complaint; she was bedridden and in constant pain, and orthodox medicine could do nothing for her. Finally, she was given 6 to 12 months to live. The couple were at their wits' end – and decided, as a last resort, to attend one of John Cain's public sessions.

Mrs Speirs was sceptical. She took one look at the session in progress, and

## One woman's testimony

exclaimed, 'Get me away from here, what a phoney lot! They are not sick.' But Cain persuaded her to undergo healing. Kneeling by her side, he put one hand on her back and one on her stomach, and in that instant – just as if, she said later, a light had been switched off – every trace of pain left her.

The pain has not returned – and, indeed, Mrs Speirs appears to have been cured of *all* her ailments. As Mr Speirs says: 'But for John Cain I'd have been a widow these last three years. Instead I have a healthy, energetic wife – who is almost getting too young for me now!'





could be produced by his photograph alone. This has happened even with people who have no idea of the picture's unusual properties, as the publisher of two books about Cain can verify. A visitor from another publishing house promptly slumped back in his chair in a state of deep relaxation after looking at Cain's picture. The photograph is just one way in which Cain can reach people beyond his physical presence. Dealing personally with all the requests for help became increasingly difficult, but Cain found another extraordinary solution to the problem.

He learned that he could condition others to produce the altered state just as he did and through this method of proxy healing could extend help to those he could not visit by

Cain's healing – an unexpected source of help – that prompted Valerie Wooding to write a book to give others an idea of what they might expect from the treatment. For most people, healing is unknown territory – and for Cain, too, there have been a few surprises as his talent developed over the years.

#### **Boxing, judo . . . and healing**

From an early age, Cain was aware of a healing ability: he could soothe his mother's headaches quickly and found that aches and pains responded well to massage. But his main interests at that time lay in more typical youthful pursuits: boxing, judo, yoga and, later, dancing were the kinds of activity that claimed his attention.

After working in a number of different jobs, he settled down in 1960 at the age of 29 with his own blacksmith's business in Wallasey, Merseyside. This grew and expanded so that by the early 1970s he was enjoying an income of around £20,000 per annum, the Rolls-Royce in the driveway providing a visible sign of his affluence. But all the time Cain continued healing. Then, in 1971, he reached a crisis in his life. Torn between two worlds, he realised that he had to make a choice. Healing won. Cain turned over the business he had built up to his brother and opened his door to an unknown future as a healer. His new work was to develop in unexpected ways.

Until this time, Cain had been healing mainly through the laying on of hands. But in 1973, when he was treating a young woman who had had a hysterectomy, both healer and patient went into a trance-like state during which the girl bent back from the waist, an apparently impossible feat for someone in her condition. From then on, Cain's ability to induce an altered state of consciousness in his patients became part of his healing. He also discovered other abilities.

As well as being able to induce this state himself, Cain found that the same effect



Above and right: John Glover, the victim of an industrial accident, was in constant pain when he first saw Cain. He had had traction, and spent several months in plaster, all to no avail: the mysterious pain in his back persisted. Under John Cain's guidance, however, he was soon doing exercises that his specialist insisted he could do only under anaesthetic; for instance, during sessions with Cain he was able to touch his toes – something the specialist had been trying to get him to do for four years

enabling their friends and relatives to carry out healing in his place. It is a very practical solution to the pressing problem of numbers. Up to a hundred people have been known to visit his home each day, while several hundred attend the public sessions. While he usually gives personal attention to everyone present, there is a limit to the amount of time he can spend with each person. So, both at his home and at the public demonstrations, he uses a band of selected helpers, most of whom are ex-patients, to act as proxy healers. 'All I need do is give my consent for healing to work through others and it will happen,' says Cain. 'But they've got to get their egos out of the way.' For his part, one of his helpers says, 'I link up mentally with John. That's the only way I can explain it.'

The same kind of extension of this healing power seems to be involved in absent healing: people telephone or write to Cain for help, but how they establish contact is not important. What seems to matter is that a link is forged in time of need. A dramatic demonstration of the independence of the effect from any physical contact between Cain and those he treats can be seen at the public healing sessions. On these occasions, up to 50 people take their places seated on mattresses on the floor at the centre of the hall. Cain starts off the proceedings with what he calls his 'beam out'. Kneeling in front of the seated patients, he goes into a



light altered state of consciousness, raises and spreads his arms (which, he says, 'feel as if they become steel rods') and within 10 seconds or so, everyone in the hall has passed into a state of deep relaxation.

One of Cain's patients described the 'beam out' like this: 'I felt a surge of power in the area of my solar plexus which then seemed to spread to the rest of my body, then later on while the healing was still in progress, I closed my eyes and, although completely aware of everything about me, I felt completely immobile.' Others, too, have reported this sensation of being rooted to the spot and able to move freely once more only when the healing process has come to its conclusion. On average, people stay in the altered state of consciousness for about 30 minutes or so. But one cancer sufferer found she felt 'compelled' to remain for the best part of two hours. 'At one point, I wanted to get up, but just couldn't move.'

Explanations for what Cain does have been sought by a number of researchers – and not least by Cain himself. So far they have drawn a blank. Could it be explained by 'mass hysteria' (see page 670) or hypnotism? Malcolm Hughes, a lecturer at Birmingham Polytechnic and a specialist in psychosomatic medicine, observed a public session and questioned participants about their experience. 'I noticed that all had been induced into a comatose position and appeared to vary in their degrees of consciousness. First



impressions ruled out the use of hypnotic techniques in the inducement of this state. This was further substantiated by some of the subjects later, as the state they described as entering into bore little resemblance to that experienced by those undergoing hypnosis.'

He also ruled out suggestion since, apart from anything else, there was a three-year-old child among those treated who could not reasonably be expected to have built up any faith in Cain's abilities. 'Yet, as with other subjects,' says Hughes, 'including a handful

of sceptics, she too adopted an altered state for the duration of the session.'

Dr Donald Blything, a Merseyside psychologist, has watched Cain at work. He says, 'It is not easy to say what takes place during a healing session. All I can say is that I can induce an altered state of consciousness with the use of hypnotherapy. But I acknowledge that John Cain has superior gifts in this field and would say that his ability to induce the altered state "en masse" is extraordinary and extremely beneficial.'

These accounts appear in *You don't know John Cain?* by Pat Sykes. It contains details of 33 carefully sifted cases of cures achieved in the most unlikely circumstances. They are remarkable testimonies to Cain's abilities to bring about improvement when all else has failed.

### Relief from constant pain

Mary Price, from Neath in South Wales, suffered from osteo-arthritis, a bowel disorder, stomach ulcers and a respiratory problem. In August 1979 she underwent a week of treatment by Cain – and afterwards allegedly no longer needed to take pain killers or use her wheelchair.

If the investigators are unsure of how Cain achieves his results, so too is he. 'I can honestly say that I don't know really how it works, I only know that it does.' He believes that he is helped in his work by spirit guides, but he prefers not to be dogmatic. Clearly, what Cain is doing affects the consciousness of his patients at a profound level and triggers off therapeutic processes that other forms of treatment have failed to reach. That, as far as his patients are concerned, is enough. They are concerned most with what he does, rather than with the explanations for the often amazing results he achieves. Nevertheless, there remains the exciting prospect that John Cain's work can teach us more about the healing process. John Cain seems to be one of the rare people who holds the key to a deeper understanding of the nature of the gift of healing.





# Live wires and loose connections



**When are 'electric people' poltergeists, and poltergeists 'electric people'? Are the notable similarities in their psychic abilities related to the basic electrical nature of all living things? BOB RICKARD assesses this idea**

IT IS REASONABLE to assume that 'electric people' have always been with us. People with the unfortunate ability to shock those who touch them, or to cause objects around them to move, would attract attention in any age. The phenomenon would then be explained according to the ideas influencing that age, such as witchcraft, fairies, spirits, animal magnetism, physical science.

The most consistent view of electric people has been to see them as possessed by elementals or spirits. The modern version is that they are the focus of, or the unconscious cause of, a poltergeist attack, the first explanation according to the Spiritualists and the second according to psychical researchers. Both electric people and poltergeists exhibit remarkably similar phenomena. But while it is easy to find records of poltergeist-like

Pictures created by sensitives using magnetised objects during experiments with Karl von Reichenbach in the 19th century. This German scientist believed that all paranormal phenomena could be explained by something he called the 'odic force', which closely resembled magnetism or electricity

activities among 'electric girls', it is much harder to find electric girls in the mass of data on poltergeists. This is almost certainly because many investigators of poltergeists did not know what to look for, or how to interpret what they found. But there is no doubt that electric girls and poltergeists are alike in the production of energetic effects without an apparent energy source, in control over gravitation, in the teleportation of objects and living creatures through solid walls, in generating force without reaction, and other psi effects not affected by space or time.

In their book *Poltergeists* (1979), which is an extensive analysis of poltergeist phenomena and theories, Alan Gauld and A.D. Cornell acknowledge these similarities but warn that it does not automatically follow that poltergeists are the product of electromagnetic forces. In fact very little electromagnetism is detected in today's poltergeist investigations.

In isolation this comment seemingly disposes of the problem, but it loses impact when considered in the context of the



complex and dispersed tradition of para-electrical and paramagnetic phenomena associated with abnormal mental states. It is this body of experience from the pioneering days of psychology and medical hypnotism, almost forgotten today, that provides the most useful data relating poltergeists to electric people.

When Franz Anton Mesmer formulated his theory of 'animal magnetism' in 1766, his language was that of electricity and magnetism. It was the Marquis de Puységur who, on investigating mesmerism, first discovered and described the state today known as the hypnotic trance. His hypnotised patients frequently manifested different personalities and experienced bizarre phenomena, such as seeing the hypothetical magnetic force streaming from the eyes and hands of the 'magnetisers', or hypnotists.

### Access to the subconscious


From the early days of mesmerism and the birth of medical hypnotism in the 1840s, there was no shortage of doctors eager to explore and use its anaesthetic, cathartic and therapeutic values. Doctors also regarded hypnotism as an exciting method of gaining direct access to a patient's subconscious. One of the pioneers of this kind of application was a French physician, Dr J.H.D. Petetin, whose work was published at his death in 1808. He experimented with emotionally disturbed patients, and was fascinated by the seemingly electrical nature of catalepsy, a form of deep lethargy arising from a nervous disorder and related to hysteria. He found that cataleptics could generate electrical charges strong enough to affect compasses and electroscopes (devices detecting very small electrical charges), and to give off shocks. One of Petetin's classic experiments


Right: an American advertisement at the turn of the century offers a 'triumph over obstacles' through 'Hypnotism, Personal Magnetism, Magnetic Healing, etc'. The motive may have been commercial, but the message says what many who have investigated the paranormal believe – that all of us can probably develop latent psychic powers

Below: in the famous German horror film *The cabinet of Dr Caligari*, Cesare, 'the somnambulist' (foreground) is under the hypnotic power of the evil doctor (centre, in straightjacket). Hypnotism as developed by followers of Anton Mesmer's 'animal magnetism' was intended for healing, and has been so used in conventional as well as alternative medicine. But films like this – and fictional characters like Svengali – reflect popular fears about 'mind control' by unscrupulous hypnotists



## PERSONAL MAGNETISM





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involved a patient whose sense of hearing had relocated in the pit of her stomach. When he placed electrically non-conductive materials over the patient's stomach, Petetin found that she was rendered 'deaf'. When a group of people linked hands, with the first person resting the fingers of one hand on the patient's stomach, the patient could clearly hear words whispered into the hand of the last person in the chain; and when electrically non-conductive materials were placed between the linked hands anywhere along the chain, 'deafness' again ensued. The patient could still hear if electrically conductive materials were placed between the hands, so Petetin concluded he was dealing with a biological force that acted like electricity.

### A strange unknown force

Because similar effects were demonstrated by 'magnetised' or hypnotised patients, in 1823 the Paris physician Alexandre Bertrand came up with the idea that there must be at least four kinds of trance state: that arising naturally, that arising from physical or emotional illness, that induced artificially through the new techniques, and that of a divine or ecstatic origin. He thought that the strange unknown force of 'animal electricity' played a part in all of these.

We now know that experiments with electric people have a disturbing tendency to conform to the theories of the experimenter, and that the phenomena often do not occur in the face of strong scepticism. We know that many of the phenomena and the forms they take are the direct result of the power of suggestion, but we still have to find an explanation for the overtly electrical and





magnetic characteristics of these effects.

In the early 1880s, a teenager named Lulu Hurst toured the world as 'The Georgia Wonder', not to be confused with Annie Abbott, another electric girl from Georgia, who followed Lulu's circuit about 10 years later (see page 2109). Lulu could control gravity and neutralise force – or so it seemed. No one could budge or lift her or any object she touched, unless she willed it. When Lulu held one end of a billiard cue, she could effortlessly push or pull a group of men holding the other end, no matter how hard they resisted. Objects would be drawn irresistibly to her when she held her hands over them, even those that would not be attracted to a magnet, such as a straw hat. After retiring from the stage, Lulu Hurst wrote her autobiography. She revealed that her strange powers began in 1883 when she was 15 years old. There were loud raps near her, crockery was smashed by unseen hands, and objects vanished. Unlike the Fox sisters (see page 1394) who attributed similar events to disincarnate spirits, Lulu realised that the phenomena somehow originated with her, for the raps sounded in time to tunes she thought of but did not vocalise.

Others have trained themselves to produce mind-over-matter effects. For example, Mayne R. Coe wrote in *Fate* magazine (July 1959) that through meditation he had taught himself to generate an electrostatic charge in his muscles and to radiate it directionally through his hands. There is some evidence that such abilities are latent within all of us, only awaiting the right stimulus. When Uri Geller first bent a fork on British television, a number of viewers came forward afterwards saying that the demonstration had triggered their own abilities to do the same. These volunteers have been tested successfully by

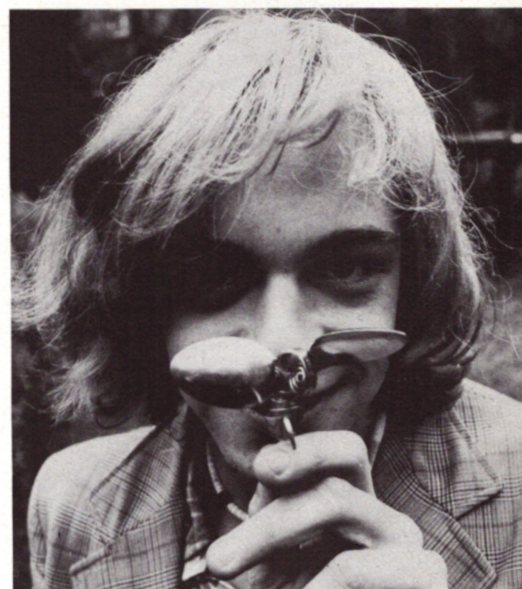
Uri Geller (above) became world famous as a metal bender and kindled a whole series of scientific investigations into mind-over-matter phenomena, including those by Professor John Hasted of Birkbeck College, University of London. Stephen North (right) is one of the later generation of spoon benders working with Professor Hasted. Some of the PK phenomena are remarkably similar to the effects produced by the 'electric people'

#### Further reading

William R. Corliss (ed.), *Incredible life*, Sourcebooks (Northridge) 1981  
E.J. Dingwall, *Abnormal hypnotic phenomena* (4 vols), Churchill 1968  
Vincent Gaddis, *Mysterious fires and lights*, David McKay (New York) 1967  
Alan Gauld and A.D. Cornell, *Poltergeists*, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1979  
John Michell and R.J.M. Rickard, *Phenomena, a book of wonders*, Thames and Hudson 1977  
Herbert Thurston, *The physical phenomena of mysticism*, Burns Oates 1952

Professor John Hasted of Birkbeck College in London (see page 838). Following Geller's tour of Japan in 1973, thousands of people began to bend spoons paranormally. A number were tested by Dr S. Sasaki at Denki Tsushin University. Some of these metal benders are literally electric people: one 12-year-old boy could recharge dead batteries simply by holding them.

Research into psychokinetic abilities has been limited in the West, but the Russians have explored almost every aspect and application. Dr Sergeyev claims to have developed detectors that can measure a subtle 'force field' around the human body at a distance of 4 feet (1.2 metres). The fluctuations of these detectors are related to psychokinetic performance and to geomagnetic conditions. Such research, to which the term 'psychotronic' is applied, is part of a concerted plan to identify and control the subtle energies of the human body. The Russian successes so far raise the disturbing prospect of harnessing the powers of the poltergeist for war – shades of Charles Fort (see page 1723).



To balance this destructive potential we must consider the many theories by eminent scientists about the bioelectrical nature of people and life itself. Foremost among these is the embryologist Professor Harold Burr, whose book *Blueprint for immortality* (1972) details the discovery of subtle electrodynamic 'force fields' surrounding living organisms. Burr thinks these fields may serve as 'moulds' or models for the developing organism. It was this idea that helped Dr Rupert Sheldrake formulate his theory of formative causation. This explains the forms found in the animate and inanimate world, and the phenomena of learning and memory, in terms of an entirely new kind of biological field that acts on the physical world across time and space (see pages 1141 and 1941). With this new paradigm, the world trembles on the brink of truly epic discoveries.



revealed that the village to which I was to deliver the envelope was some 12 miles (20 kilometres) outside the city. The next evening, with some difficulty, I made my way there via the local train network.

Having found the house, explained my mission and been welcomed by the delighted, if somewhat tearful, parents, I eventually said goodbye and found my way back to the ruined station, where I awaited a train to the city centre. It was now pitch dark, and the drizzle was becoming more persistent. What was more, the silence and the depressing surroundings were, for some reason, beginning to make me feel uneasy.

### **Spectre of the night**

Mentally willing my train to appear, I pulled out a cigarette and, as I searched through my pockets for a match, I became aware of approaching footsteps. I am not sure what I expected to see; but as I peered apprehensively into the shadows, I found myself breathing an inward sigh of relief as, striding towards me along the platform, there came a short, uniformed figure.

'Hello pal! Got a light?' a broad Lancashire voice asked.

'Yes. Hang on! I've got one here,' I replied; as the little man leaned forward to light his cigarette I happened to notice, in the wavering light of the match, that the top of his little finger was missing.

'Ta pal. Goin' into town?' my companion asked.

'Yes. Are you?'

'No lad. I'm goin' t'other way.'

I remember we exchanged a few pleasantries and then, having obviously noticed my own accent, he asked me whereabouts in Lancashire I came from.

'Oldham originally,' I said. 'But we live near Bedford now.'

'Oldham! That's my home town. Where did you live, lad?'

I gave him the name of the street in which we had lived, and almost before I had finished speaking, he asked my name. I told him – and there was silence for a second or two.

'Well I'll be damned,' he said slowly. 'Are you Tommy's boy?'

It was now my turn to be astonished, for Tommy was indeed my father's Christian name.

'Why yes, I am,' I replied.

'Well, you tell your dad you've seen me – Harry Whittaker,' he chuckled. 'Anyway, here's me train now, so ta-ta lad. Don't forget!' With that, he hurried over to the dimly lit train that was pulling in at the other side of the platform.

I just had time to shout a farewell back to him when my own train arrived. Stepping into the acrid

smelling carriage, I peered through the rain-smeared window as the train opposite pulled out of the station.

During the homeward journey I couldn't stop thinking of the coincidence of my chance meeting. The following day I wrote to my parents, telling my father that I had met his old pal.

Having posted the letter, I tried to dismiss the incident from my mind. But a strange feeling kept coming back to me that there had been something wrong that night. Was it that Harry had been wearing a peaked cap, and not the usual beret, or was it that he appeared to be about the same age as my father, who was then almost 60 – and far too old for military service?

Still – even so, I finally decided, he could be working for the NAAFI, maybe, or Control Commission perhaps, or one or other of the myriad semi-military organisations that flourished in occupied Germany and whose uniforms, and the age limits they set for their staff, varied considerably.

Having thus put my mind at rest, I forgot the affair – until the following week, when I received my usual letter from home, in which my mother wrote that Dad was very interested in my meeting with his old friend, and could I give him any more details?

Accordingly I replied, this time telling the story more fully, and I ended by saying that if my father could find out his unit from someone, I would try to contact him again.

By return post, I received a letter in my father's handwriting. The contents of his letter have remained with me all my life. I shall never forget them.

### **Mystery man**

My father wrote that he was pleased I had met Harry, as they were, at one time, very good friends. They had served together in 1918 and, upon their return to Oldham, had worked in the same cotton mill, where Harry had lost the tip of his finger in a machine. He had indeed been a short chap with a broad Lancashire accent.

'However,' wrote my father, 'I doubt if he is working for the NAAFI in Germany right now, as he died before you were born twenty one years ago.'

In the summer of 1981, after a lapse of some 34 years, I took my wife and schoolboy son to see that little station near Hamburg. It was a picture postcard scene, with the morning Sun shining on the bright paintwork, and the colourful flower-filled little window boxes. Gone now are the twisted roof girders, the shattered glass and the grimy oil lamps. But the pillar against which I had stood on that dismal autumn evening in 1946 is still there, just as it was, and so is the platform on which I spent a few minutes talking to – whom?



# Brief encounter

**How does it feel to meet a ghost? J.A. MORRISON tells of the strange experience he had while serving in Germany with the British Army shortly after the Second World War**

Germany in the autumn of 1946 was a wasteland of ruins and utter desolation – and nowhere, possibly, was the devastation more complete than in and around the bomb-shattered city of Hamburg to which I had been posted.

One cold, dreary October evening I stood, shoulders hunched, the collar of my army greatcoat turned up against the cold, by a pillar at the end of a deserted, fire-blackened platform on a burnt-out railway station just outside the city.

A mere 72 hours earlier, I had been back home, at the Saturday night hop, in the little Bedfordshire town of Amphill, enjoying the last few hours of my 10-day leave. Even the weather had been glorious then – blue skies, clear soft evenings, and the sweet smell of burning leaves lingering in the twilight.

Walking towards the hall in which the dance was being held, I passed a German prisoner-of-war camp that still housed many former members of the Wehrmacht awaiting repatriation to their homeland. On impulse I stopped and, beckoning over the wire to one of the prisoners, I enquired of him whether there was anyone in the camp from Hamburg or thereabouts. Intimating that there was, the prisoner hurried off in the direction of some black-painted Nissen huts. He reappeared shortly with a companion, who informed me that he lived in a village near Hamburg.

I explained to him that I was stationed in the city, and would be returning there the following day. Should he wish to write to his family, I would deliver the letter. My offer was gratefully accepted, and later I collected from him a bulky letter to his parents.

On my return to Germany, a study of the map

*continued overleaf*



It was in the outskirts of ruined Hamburg (left, immediately after a British bombing raid) that reader J.A. Morrison (above) found himself talking to a ghost